

## NLAF Prisoners Forum Report to NLAF – May 2017

The NLAF Prisoners Forum met on 25 May 2017. At this meeting Richard Funston handed over the chairing of the Prisoners Forum to Camilla Pandolfini, Senior Solicitor at the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC). Richard was thanked for his many years of chairing and contributing to the Forum. Key issues discussed at the meeting included:

### **Weave Youth & Community Services – Creating Futures Justice Program**

Creating Futures is a holistic program providing bail, pre and post prison release intensive case management support to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men and women, aged 18-30 years living in or with a strong connection to the City of Sydney LGA or La Perouse. They prefer to start working with people at least 12 weeks prior to release from custody but this is not always possible. A range of supports are provided directly by Weave programs as well as links to services which can assist with housing, training and employment.

### **Inspector of Custodial Services**

An overview was provided about the Women in Remand Inspection which is currently underway. See terms of reference [here](#). Consultations are currently occurring with relevant government and non-government agencies to prepare for 5 prison visits scheduled from June to September. Staff and prisoners will be interviewed during prison visits. The final report should be available early 2018.

### **Complaints by prisoners to the NSW Ombudsman's Office**

An overview of statistics regarding the type and number of complaints by prisoners over the last 12 months to the Ombudsman's office was provided. Full details will be available in their forthcoming Annual Report including case studies.

### **Better Prisons Project**

BSI Learning (a Queensland company) have been announced as the preferred tenderer to provide the majority of education services in NSW Correctional Centres. See media release [here](#).

### **Lawyer Client Communications when client is in custody**

A number of issues were raised regarding lawyer client communications relating to:

- Prisoner access to phone numbers and phones
- AVL quality of suites and availability
- Prisoner access to computers to read electronic briefs.

These will be discussed further at the next meeting.

### **WDO Guidelines and Victims Restitution Order (VRO) Debts**

The meeting was advised that the WDO Guidelines have been updated and came into effect on 19 May 2017. In addition VRO debts have now been transferred to the Office of State Revenue (OSR) as court fines to manage through normal fine enforcement options. Legal Aid NSW WDO Service is currently working with OSR to develop business rules and communications to advise WDO sponsors about this change and how these larger debts will be managed. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Prisoners Forum is 24 August 2017.

### **Camilla Pandolfini**

Senior Solicitor PIAC

Chair NLAF Prisoners Forum, May 2017